

VZCZCXRO4940
PP RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHNEH
DE RUEHNE #0612/01 0901043
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 311043Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5951
INFO RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1638
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 4485
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 3700
RUEHNEH/AMCONSUL HYDERABAD 0400
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 2035
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 5917
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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 9398
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 3527
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 7780
RHOVVKG/COMSEVENTHFLT
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 NEW DELHI 000612

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NP, AC, PM

STATE FOR INR/MR

STATE FOR SCA/INS, PM/CBM, PM/PRO

STATE FOR SCA/PPD, PA/RRU

STATE FOR AID/APRE-A

USDOC FOR 4530/IEP/ANESA/OSA FOR BILL MURPHY

E.O. 12958:N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S
ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN
(CONTINUED)

This cable reports on relevant media reaction from
India's English and large non-English press.

SUMMARY: For a second day the President's March 27
announcement of the new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and
Pakistan generated editorial commentary in the
countrywide Indian press. All media highlighted the March
30 Taliban terror attack on a Lahore police compound.
India's strategic affairs guru K. Subrahmanyam strongly
supported the President's announcement, while India's
newspaper of record, THE TIMES OF INDIA, cautiously
welcomed the President's "vision." There was appreciation
for the Administration's intent to include significant
international stakeholders (e.g. India) in the Af-Pak
effort. Some commentators, however, expressed the usual
concerns that the new Administration is making the same
mistake as the last one by placing too much trust in
Pakistan. END SUMMARY.

¶1. "PUSH FORWARD," editorial in March 31 Centrist,
Independent, nationally circulating THE TIMES OF INDIA
English daily: "With the suicide bombing of a mosque...and
the audacious assault on a police training centre... on the
outskirts of Lahore, the Taliban-terrorist nexus has
reimposed its warped vision of political discourse in
emphatic fashion. That this has come so soon after
President Barack Obama's unveiling of his new Af-Pak
policy is, in all likelihood, no coincidence. The
insurgent forces crippling Pakistan and Afghanistan are
sending a clear message. Obama's response must be to

push through his outlined strategy; its two-pronged approach has the potential to finally turn the tide. The first of these is an unprecedented internationalist approach to the Af-Pak problem. The Contact Group that includes India, Russia, China and Iran has the scope to achieve far more than a go-it-alone approach by the US.... The second facet of the Af-Pak policy is a long-overdue course correction in dealing with Pakistan.... Obama has shown that he has the vision to deal with the problem. Now he must deliver on it."

¶2. "THE OBAMA STRATEGY: PAKISTAN ARMY PUT ON NOTICE," op-ed analysis in the Independent, Centrist, North India circulating English daily THE TRIBUNE by pundit K. Subrahmanyam: "President Obama in his speech of March 27, introducing his new strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has brought clarity to the issue and declared that the war is against Al-Qaeda and its allies.... He is not referring to Pakistan as a front-line state and an ally in the war against terrorism. Those were myths generated by General Musharraf and swallowed lock, stock and barrel by Mr Colin Powell, Mr Richard Armitage, Mr Don Rumsfeld and others of the Bush Administration. President Obama refers to Pakistan as under partial occupation of Al-Qaeda and in danger of being overrun by it and its allies.... There is an implied warning to Pakistan on the kind of military aid it will get as well as its quantum. President Obama had made no secret of the fact that past military aid received by Pakistan had been misused by it to equip itself largely to fight war against India.... By

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creating a contact group...US and the NATO are attempting to quarantine Pakistan and Afghanistan as terrorism-infected countries needing urgent international treatment. President Obama has unveiled a new strategy of isolating Pakistan and it is not a continuation of the Bush strategy."

¶3. "IN AND OUT," editorial in the March 31 Centrist, East Indian THE TELEGRAPH: "It is odd that an 'exit strategy' should be made up almost entirely of entrenchment. On the face of it, that is what Barack Obama's new policy in Afghanistan envisages ... Mr Obama is undoubtedly a pragmatist ... The success of the policy, however, hinges on factors other than Mr Obama's pious intentions. For one, conditions within Afghanistan are largely dependent on whether Hamid Karzai retains the presidency and whether the Americans are able to control him effectively. Two, the much celebrated objective of talking with the enemies is predicated less on US's willingness to talk and more on the former's unwillingness to engage in any conversation with infidels ... Three, the obduracy of Pakistan. Strangely, the new strategy seems to give more thought to Afghanistan than to dealing with Pakistan and its reluctance to engage in the war on terror more earnestly in the absence of the Kashmir factor. Four, the expectation that Russia, Iran and China will abide by their appointed roles instead of playing spoilers in the great game. What is common to all these four factors is the shadow of uncertainty. Past certainties of American policy have evaporated. Mr Obama's realpolitik might become the maximization of the uncertain."

¶4. "LAHORE AGAIN," editorial in March 31 Independent, Centrist, nationally circulating English daily THE INDIAN EXPRESS: "Coming just three days after Obama called the Pakistan-Afghan border the most dangerous place in the world, it [the Lahore attack], cruelly, shows the complexity of the task he is trying to pare down to an effort 'to disrupt, dismantle and defeat' Al-Qaeda in Pakistan.... Obama's reiteration of focus on taking on terrorists on Pakistani territory is timely. But as this newspaper responded to his announcement, it is the modality of carrying through that intent that invites a

degree of skepticism. Obama made the fight against terrorists in what is now called the Af-Pak region a key foreign policy component during his campaign. But there is concern that while he recognizes the security challenges emanating from the region, he has not modified his predecessor administration's mode of operation enough. After all, he appears still reliant on the Pakistan army to deliver, even though his generals are reported to have told Pakistan that they believe elements in the ISI continue to maintain links with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban."

15. "FAILING TO AF-PAK A PUNCH," op-ed in March 31 Independent, Centrist, nationally circulating English daily THE INDIAN EXPRESS by Dhruva Jaishankar: "U.S. President Barack Obama's strategy for overcoming his most

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serious foreign policy challenge to date - terrorism and insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan - has finally taken on both shape and direction.... From an Indian standpoint, there are several reasons to be satisfied with the result of the strategy review and Obama's own remarks. First, for Obama and his advisors, the region's problems are centered squarely on Pakistan, which, while but a recognition of reality, mark the first time they have been so framed by the American leadership.... This marks a fundamental change in official American rhetoric: Afghanistan has now become the frontline state for a war in Pakistan. It is no longer the other way around. Secondly, the administration has proposed establishing a so-called "Contact Group" - which would include regional powers such as India, Russia and Iran.... This recognition that regional actors will need to be brought on board to ameliorate the current situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is another welcome but long-overdue development.... The white paper correctly recognizes the necessity of a long-term American commitment to Afghanistan, evoking a more involved and long-term counterinsurgency strategy rather than a much more limited policy of preventive counterterrorism."

16. "JIHADIS VERSUS JIHADIS: PAKISTAN IS FAST GOING UNDER," editorial in March 31 Nationalist, pro-BJP, North India circulating English daily THE PIONEER: "Given that it was only 72 hours ago that US President Barack Obama outlined his new Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy - the thrust of which was rooting out Al Qaeda and the Taliban from the region and redoubling efforts towards this goal - the Manawan attack can be seen as a sharp response by jihadi groups asserting that they have no intentions of surrendering or going underground.... The recent spate of terrorist attacks in Pakistan comprehensively proves that Islamabad is totally incapable of dealing with terror groups operating out of its soil. For the sake of regional and global security, it is time for donor nation to abandon their soft line on Pakistan and force that country to act before it is too late. Democracy-building is fine, but it must follow the destruction of terrorism. If that means freezing funds and giving the green signal to an international force to conduct military ground operations to destroy terror camps in Pakistan, so be it."

17. "CAN OBAMA FIND OSAMA?" editorial in March 31 centrist Gujarati daily GUJARATMITRA: "The Taliban and Al Qaeda are making rapid advances into Pakistan and this poses serious security concerns not just for South Asia but also for western nations, especially America.... It is but natural that America's blood is boiling over this grim scenario. Its new Af-Pak strategy aims to dismantle the safe havens of terrorists. For this, it has stated in no uncertain terms that Pakistan cannot continue to receive a blank check from America unless it proves its sincerity in the war against terrorism.... This approach clearly indicates that America has realized that terrorism is not

restricted to America or India, but is a global threat."

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¶8. "AMERICA'S DILEMMA," editorial in March 30 North Indian, right-of-center Hindi daily JANSATTA: "President Obama's Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy can be called old wine in a new bottle. It is Bush's old strategy with a facelift. What's new in the U.S. conceding that Pakistan is a den of terror? Experts have been saying it forever, but the U.S. heeds them not. The U.S. has never really attempted to factor in the concerns of India, Russia and China. Even in this announcement, it is merely said others will be consulted; no active participation by others is envisaged."

¶9. "MR. OBAMA, DO NOT FEED THE BEAST," op-ed by editor Ashwini Kumar in March 31 nationalist, North India circulating Hindi daily PUNJAB KESARI: "What's so new in Mr. Obama's Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy? India has been screaming from the rooftops about Pakistan's lack of seriousness in the fight against terror. Despite the mollycoddling of Pakistan by the U.S., it has turned into a snake pit of international terror.... In his Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, Obama chides Pakistan, but also rewards it with financial aid. You can give milk to the serpent, but it will still bite you!"

¶10. "THE FIRE OF TERRORISM," editorial in March 31 Centrist nationally circulating Hindi daily NAVBHARAT TIMES: "The U.S. sees terrorism in South Asia through the prism of its own interest. In his Af-Pak strategy announcement President Obama may say there will be no blank checks for Pakistan, but in reality he is perpetuating the same policies as George Bush's. How else does one explain the 1.5 billion dollars in aid that the U.S. recently announced for Pakistan? The U.S. Administration has not paid heed to its own agencies who have pointed out numerous times that Pakistan's ISI spy agency covertly supports terrorists. Is the U.S. Administration aware that despite all the financial and military help to Pakistan, the Taliban cadres in that country have only gained in strength?"

¶11. "OBAMA'S AF-PAK STRATEGY," op-ed in March 31 Centrist nationally circulating Hindi daily DAINIK BHASKAR by strategic commentator Ved Pratap Vaidik: "President Obama's new Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy announced March 27 is timely and practical, unlike that of his predecessor George Bush. Mr. Bush spent lavishly in this region, but held no one accountable. Therefore, despite its sacrifices, the U.S. came out looking bad in both these countries. Bush also never cracked the whip on Pakistan, never asked what it was doing to contain the Al Qaeda or Taliban. The Pakistani spy agency ISI's nexus with Taliban and Al Qaeda was never explored by Bush. Hopefully Obama will focus on this. Another departure in Obama's policy is that he has not minced words in saying US will act directly if Pakistan fails. Although there were occasional instances of direct action even during Bush's tenure, Obama is more direct in his strategy. Another very significant point in Obama's strategy is that he has included the international community in the Af-Pak effort as a stakeholder. But despite being

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practical, the Af-Pak strategy is not very far-sighted and may not contribute to strengthening Afghanistan."

¶12. "THE LAHORE ATTACK," editorial in March 31 Mumbai circulating Centrist Marathi daily LOKMAT. "The second major attack in Lahore within a month has not just shaken Pakistani administration and neighboring India, but it sends a signal to the Obama Administration as well.... Now

it is not the time for rhetoric, it is the time for action. It is the time to decide whether Pakistan deserves U.S. aid and whether that aid is going into the wrong hands...."

¶13. "PAKISTAN IS CONFRONTING WHAT IT CREATED FOR YEARS," editorial in the March 31 Centrist Gujarati daily DIVYA BHASKAR. "The bloody Lahore siege indicates that the monster of terrorism Pakistan has nurtured over the years is ready to ingest its creator.... Homegrown fundamentalists and radicals in Pakistan who led jihad in Afghanistan and Indian part of Kashmir are now causing ravage in Pakistan itself.... It is sad that Pakistan has dug its own grave by encouraging religious extremism on its soil over the years."

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